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BIRD SONGS

— OF —

NEW ENGLAND.

HARRIET E. PAINE

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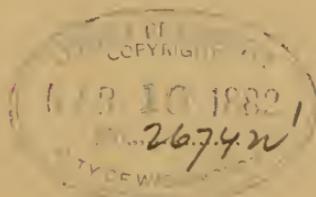


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OF

NEW ENGLAND.

BY HARRIET E. PAINE.



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"HOWSOE'ER THE WORLD
WENT ILL. CERTAINLY
THE THRUSHES STILL SANG IN IT."

—*Mrs. Browning.*



NOTE.

These verses make no claim as poetry. Their aim is, simply, to give some idea of the common bird-songs, which are usually caught more readily when the notes are associated with accented words.

The music of the Red Thrush, for instance, is complicated, but can easily be remembered by Thoreau's interpretation of it :

“ Drop it ! Drop it ! Cover it up ! ” etc.

The time of day, the season and the locality in which the songs are most frequently heard have been preserved, and I hope the information given may be full and accurate enough to enable readers to identify some of the birds for themselves.

H. E. P.

Groveland, Mass., March, 1882.



❖ BIRD SONGS. ❖



Dawn.

THE beautiful day is breaking,
The first faint line of light
Parts the shadows of the night,
And a thousand birds are waking.
I hear the Hairbird's slender trill,—
So fine and perfect it doth fill
The whole sweet silence with its thrill.

A rosy flush creeps up the sky,
The birds begin their symphony.
I hear the clear, triumphant voice
Of the Robin, bidding the world rejoice.
The Vireos catch the theme of the song,
And the Baltimore Oriole bears it along,
While from Sparrow, and Thrush, and Wood Pewee,
And, deep in the pine trees, the Chickadee,
There's an undercurrent of harmony.

The Linnet sings like a magic flute,
The Lark and Blue-bird touch the lute,
The Starling pipes to the shining morn
With the vibrant note of the joyous horn,
The splendid Jay
Is the trumpeter gay,



The Kingfisher, sounding his rattle,— he
May the player upon the cymbals be,
The Cock, saluting the sun's first ray,
Is the bugler sounding a *reveille*.

“Caw! Caw!” cries the crow, and his grating tone
Completes the chord like the deep trombone.

But, above them all, the Robin sings ;
His song is the very soul of day,
And all black shadows troop away
While, pure and fresh, his music rings :
“Light is here !
“Never fear !
“Day is near !
“My dear !”





The Blue Bird.



DREAMY haze of sunlight floats
Across the shining fields of snow,
And, rippling through the glory, flow
A few delicious, liquid notes.

It is the first warm day of Spring,
When tender breezes wander by ;
And, bluer than the soft blue sky,
I see the Blue-Bird's radiant wing.

Thy message, gentle bird, I know ;
Immortal hope thou bringest me
Of love and beauty yet to be,
Of summers sure beyond the snow.



The Red-winged Starling.

DOWN in the marshes beside the river,
From the alder-bushes stiff and bare,
I hear a joyous bird-note quiver,
Clear and bright in the bleak March air,
As the Red-winged Starling calls to me:
“Quonkaree, quonkar-r-ree, quonka-ree-e-e.”

Do you really mean that the winter is over,
In spite of the chilly March wind to-day?
That violets are coming, and daisies, and clover?
Or what is it all that you try to say,
When calling so loudly and gladly to me?
“Quonkaree, quonkar-r-ree, quonka-ree-e-e.”

Mrs. Starling is still at the South, it would seem,
While you hurried forward to build her a nest
On an alder-bough hanging far over the stream,
Where the sauciest boy cannot reach to molest.
And this is the story you're telling to me
With your gay “quonkaree, quonkaree-e-e.”



Oh, Starling, you are a handsome fellow,
All dressed in sable from top to toe,
Save epaulets, red, and white, and yellow,
Which flash as you flutter to and fro.
How I love to hear you call to me :
“ Quonkaree, quonkar-r-ree, quonkaree-e-e.”





The Wood Pewee.

“**P**HŒBE ! Phœbe ! Phœbe !”
I hear that sweet and mournful cry
When the snows of winter lie
Heaped about our door.

“ Phœbe ! Phœbe ! Phœbe !”
Still I hear that plaintive call,
When the leaves of autumn fall
And blossoms are no more.

“ Phœbe ! Phœbe ! Phœbe !”
When the fair young flowers are springing,
And the air with song is ringing,
Far off in the wood I hear :

“ Phœbe ! Phœbe ! Phœbe !”
While all living things rejoice,
Still I hear that gentle voice,
Melancholy, soft and clear.



“ Phœbe ! Phœbe ! Phœbe ! ”

Dost thou mourn some long-lost love,
In those quiet notes, that move
Every tender, listening heart ?

“ Phœbe ! Phœbe ! Phœbe ! ”

In the winter thou dost cheer us,
But, when happier birds are near us,
Thou dost sadly sing apart.





The Meadow Lark.



SINGLE wave of melody,—
A few long notes, so sweet and high
It seems as if they pierced the sky ;
Hark ! Hark !
Where are you, dear Lark ?

A meadow of dainty violets blue ;
In the fragrant grasses, bright with dew,
A nest securely hid from view ;
See ! See !
There your nestlings be.



The Barn Swallow.

HE brings no beautiful song, dear child,
No musical notes ;
Yet he floats
Through the deep blue sky with rapture wild.

He only twitters among his mates,
He cannot sing ;
Yet with untired wing
He mounts and mounts to Heaven's very gates.

He sweeps through the air, till, with sudden flash,
And steady curve
Which doth not swerve,
He skims the water with dip and splash.

Is there no music within thy breast,
O, silent bird ?
It is not heard,
But impels thy flight, and thy life is blest.



The Baltimore Oriole.

IDITH, our darling, our little brown maid,
With her rosy red cheeks and her bright black eyes,
Is tired ; and I really must say, I'm afraid
That she is a little ill-tempered likewise.
But she hears from the elm bough, calling clear :
“ Look *here!* *E-dith!* *E-dith!* look *here!* ”

O, gay little bird, with your happy voice !
You beauty, flashing with jet and gold ;
Who can do anything but rejoice,
Who would wish to fret or could ever scold
While the Oriole whistles so loud and clear :
“ Look *here!* *Pee-vish!* *Pee-vish!* look *HERE?* ”



The Linnet.

WHAT is the happiest morning song?
The Linnet's. He warbles, blithe and free,
In the sunlit top of the old elm tree,
Joyous, and fresh, and hopeful, and strong.

The trees are not high enough, little bird ;
You mount, and wheel, and eddy, and soar,
And with every turn yet more and more
Your wonderful, ravishing music is heard.

A crimson speck in the bright blue sky,
Do you search for the secret of heaven's deep glow?
Is not heaven *within*, when you carol so?
Then why, dear bird, must you soar so high?

He answers nothing, but soars and sings ;
He heeds no doubtful questions like this.
He only bubbles over with bliss.
And sings, and mounts on shining wings.



The Warbling Vireo.



TINY little bird is he,
Flitting about in a bustle and fidget,
Who calls as loud as loud can be :
“ Brigadier, Brigadier, Brigadier, Bridget ”

Our Bridget is no Brigadier ;
Why do you call her so, tell me that, midget ?
But still he only answers clear :
“ Brigadier, Brigadier, Brigadier, Bridget.”

His song is like the Linnets song,
With all of the music left out, to abridge it ;*
It is not sweet, but free and strong :
“ Brigadier, Brigadier, Brigadier, Bridget.”

* A part of the Linnet's song is like the Vireo's, though the whole of it is much longer and sweeter.



The Red Eyed Vireo.

I'M tired of the Red-eyed Vireo,
Calling from morning-till night
In the tone of asserting a right :
“ There, now ! look at me ! see here ! don't you see ? ”

But yet he's a brave little creature,
He always is cheerful and gay,
Singing all through the heat of the day :
“ There, now ! Look at me ! see here ! don't you see ? ”

Perhaps he is vain, but he's happy,
And that makes *me* happy, my dear ;
After all, it is pleasant to hear :
“ There, now ! look at me ! see here ! don't you see ? ”

Have you seen his dear little dwelling,—
His nest in the fork of a tree ?
Perhaps now his meaning may be ;
“ See here ! come with me ! Nice nest ! don't you see ? ”

I really believe that I like him,
Although he can never be still,
But calls out so constant and shrill :
“ There, now ! look at me ! see here ! don't you see ? ”



Maryland Yellow-Throat.

“HO *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?”
Who so anxiously sings, yet so merrily, too?
Who *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?
I ask your own question of you.

“Who *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?”
A dear little yellow-green bird.
Who *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?
With black spectacles, now, on my word!

“Who *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?”
Who so earnestly utters this note?
Who *is* it? who *is* it? who *is* it?
Why, the Maryland Yellow-Throat.



The Golden-Crowned Thrush.

IN the hot midsummer noontide,
When all other birds are sleeping,
Still one in the silent forest,
Like a sentry, watch is keeping,
Singing in the pine tops spicy :
“ I see, I see, I SEE, I SEE.”

No one ever sees *you*, atom !
You are hidden too securely.
I have sought for hours to find you.
It is but to tease us, surely,
That you sing in pine tops spicy :
“ I see, I see, I SEE, I SEE.”

The Black and White Creeper.

LIKE an echo, far and fine,
Follows closely, line by line,
Just a slender thread of song,
Where the creeper flits along :
“ I see, I see, I see, I see.”



The Red Thrush.



H, my dainty and fine Red Thrush,
Tell me why
You never fly,
But only flit from bush to bush,
In a stately and leisurely way?
Do you never long for the sky,
My peerless, my perfect beauty?
Or do you think that the livelong day
Should be merely a round of duty?
That every-day life may be fair and sweet,
But that soaring and singing are surely meet
For a practical bird like you?
When you wish to fly, you watch your nest;
When you wish to sing, your song is addressed
To the farmer sowing his seed;
You implore him to take good heed,
And you tell him what to do:
“Drop it! Drop it!
“Cover-it-up, cover-it-up, cover-it-up,
(Faster) “Pick-it-up, pick-it-up, pick-it-up.”
My dear Red Thrush, you are noble and fine;
But, are you quite right, oh, bird of mine?



The Cat Bird.

THE simple Cat-bird, in Quaker gray,
Admires the Thrush, as well he may,
And practises over and over again
The varied notes of the Thrush's strain.
 He listens and catches
 The song by snatches,
But with all the sweet and beautiful tones
Are mingled cries and sorrowful moans.
What anguish fills his innocent breast?
Does he fear for his little ones in the nest?
Do his trials and failures make him despond?
Or is he longing for something beyond?
For, when he is sitting far up in the tree
And no one is by, what a song sings he,
 Of a thousand bewildering notes!
 And the musical utterance floats
 Through the pleasant woodland air.
Ah, then he was longing for something higher,
And the moan, after all, was a prayer.
 Do you think, my dear, we shall ever know
 Which is better, the cheerful Thrush below
Or the bird that complains but doth still aspire?



The Summer Yellow Bird.

WHO is it that sings in the maple tree,
And constantly, cheerfully, doth repeat :
“ *Kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss me,*
My *Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.*”

I see him now in the shadowy leaves,—
Or is it the sunlight rippling through?
Now the song his gentle bosom heaves ;
Ah, dear little Yellow Bird, is it you?



THE

Black-Throated Green Warbler.

THE green wood is a cathedral,
And through its arches dim
A little bird sings at noontide
A song which is like a hymn.
It rises through the summer air
Like the voice of a holy nun in prayer :
“ Hear me, Saint Theresa ! ”



The Wood Sparrow.

N an old rail fence, at the edge of the wood,
The sunset is pouring its golden flood ;
Here a dear little sparrow sits and sings,
And sweet o'er the fields his music rings.
Gentle, and bright, and fresh, and free :
“Dee, Dee, De, de, de, d', d', d', d', dee.”

Ah, you are a shy little bird, my dear ;
You will not let me come very near.
You love the fields and the bright green grass,
But the moment you hear my footsteps pass
You hide in the woods where I cannot see,
Singing, “Dee, Dee, De, d', d', d', d', dee.”



The Song Sparrow.



LITTLE gray bird with a speckled breast,
Under my window has built his nest ;
He sits on a twig and singeth clear
A song that overfloweth with cheer :

“ Love ! Love ! Love !
Let us be happy, my love.
Sing of cheer.”

Sweet and true are the notes of his song ;
Sweet — and yet always full and strong,
True — and yet they are never sad,
Serene with that peace that maketh glad :

“ Life ! Life ! Life !
Oh, what a blessing is life ;
Life is glad ! ”

Of all the birds, I love thee best,
Dear Sparrow, singing of joy and rest ;
Rest — but life and hope increase,
Joy — whose spring is deepest peace :

“ Joy ! Life ! Love !
Oh, to love and live is joy,—
Joy and peace.”

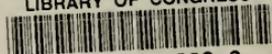


Evening Songs.

SLIDING at sunset in my boat,
I hear the Veery's bubbling note ;
And a Robin, flying late,
Sounds the home-call to his mate.
Then the sun sinks low
In the western glow,
And the birds go to rest. But hush !
Far off sings the sweet Wood-Thrush.
He sings, — and waits, — and sings again,
The liquid notes of that holy strain.
He ceases, and all the world is still ;
And then the moon climbs over the hill,
And I hear the cry of the Whip-poor-will.
Tranquil, I lay me down to sleep,
While the summer stars a vigil keep ;
And I hear from the Sparrow a gentle trill,
Which means,

“Good Night: Peace and Good-Will.”

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